



Change and Challenges

By Mark Eddy, CPA

Let me begin this, my first column, by expressing gratitude to the AHIA membership for granting me the honor of serving as your Board Chair for 2009. Our association has a long history and proud tradition of seeking “excellence through sharing.” I firmly believe in this motto and hope my efforts will enhance our professional success.

While this column will be published in February 2009, I am writing it in October 2008. There are many changes occurring that will challenge the wisdom and courage of our nation, our organizations and us personally. I don’t know how these issues will be resolved but I know we will be tested unlike anything for several generations past.

The stock market is on an incredible rollercoaster ride that is affecting everyone. Much personal wealth has been lost and is causing many to reassess their work-retirement plans. This, in turn, may have important implications to your organizations’ staffing plans; not long ago I was reading about the coming worker shortage as the baby boomers retire—how would employers respond? Many organizations seeking to raise capital through an IPO (initial public offering) have seen those plans put on hold until some sense of predictability and stability returns to the market. The government is impacted by the stock market changes, too. The direct impact of stock losses and people’s spending reaction to these changes will have tax revenue implications.

The headlines began discussing the subprime mortgage crisis. People were defaulting on their mortgages. The number of repossessed houses was driving down values and extending the time it takes to sell a home. Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, and AIG all incurred significant financial challenges to the

point of near bankruptcy. Then the situation broadened to where the entire credit market tightened. Credit card interest rates increased for those with significant outstanding credit; home equity loans were canceled or cut back. Short-term interest rates increased impacting working capital for some businesses. Banks wouldn’t grant overnight loans to each other. Wall Street firms were acquired or filed bankruptcy.

The commodities market has been a rollercoaster, too. Gold, silver, and agricultural products were up and down. Gasoline skyrocketed and, in Nashville and other locations, became scarce. I have seen gas as high as \$4.10 per gallon and a recent low of \$2.46 per gallon.

I’m a political junkie. I have watched the debates and followed the candidates through this election cycle. Each candidate has different priorities and approaches to implement their policies. The ultimate winner of the Presidency and in Congress, depending on the margin, will affect each of our organizations and us.

By this point, you are asking yourself “where is Mark going with this?” Change, which is inevitable, is coming at us significantly and quickly. Professionals and organizations must adapt to change or risk becoming obsolete. Changes, a few of which are discussed above, will create different challenges for each of us. Overcoming the challenges will mean success for our organizations, our country and us. How do we overcome so many challenges?

No one has the answers to all the questions we face daily. We need other’s help. Collectively, we can brainstorm excellent ideas. However, as discussed above, many of the changes occurring create funding challenges. You can find great help and value in AHIA.

Barbara Winburn, 2008 Board Chair, declared 2008 “the year of the volunteer” and challenged us to volunteer to improve our association. I want 2009 to be “the year of the teammate.” I challenge each of us to be better teammates to our fellow employees and to each other in the profession. This means more involvement and building relationships beyond a short-term volunteer assignment. This will only happen through a grass-roots effort where our members network locally and regionally. Atlanta, Houston, and the Northeast are providing different but very good models to make this happen. This will provide more opportunities than can be offered only at the national association level. This approach will allow us to expand our brainstorming circle at a reduced cost.

Don’t forget the other value your AHIA membership delivers. The listserve is an excellent tool to reach out to the 1,200 plus members. *New Perspectives* is a professionally recognized magazine providing thoughtful guidance on a variety of subjects. The Annual Conference Committee continues to design and deliver an ever-improving national conference (which is a great value per CPE, by the way). Other educational offerings are being developed. The AHIA Board is reaching out to other associations to find common ground that will benefit both memberships.

Working together, we can overcome fears and anxious feelings, by confidently identifying solutions to each others’ questions. This will help you grow professionally and add value to your organization.

Make a difference, get involved!

Sincerely,

Mark Eddy
Chair